

Missile Ranger, Nov. 22, 2002 -- Third Wave explained

By Steve Mears, Resource Management Directorate

Last week, Range Commander Brig. Gen. William Engel briefly discussed the Army's Third Wave in his letter to the workforce. The Third Wave is an initiative originating from Secretary of the Army Thomas E. White to implement President Bush's announced plan to consider for conversion to contract more than 800,000 military and civilian positions throughout the federal government. More than 200,000 of those positions fall under the Department of the Army.

The idea behind the Third Wave is an Army where federal employees perform their core mission of warfighting or direct support of warfighting while non-core support functions are left to the private sector. The Third Wave initiative will consider outsourcing all non-core functions. These positions may be outsourced via A-76 Commercial Activities studies or other proposed initiatives that may be non-competitive. Most of the non-competitive options are not yet available for use, needing approval by Congress.

The Third Wave is the third round of public-private outsourcing initiatives the Army has undergone in the last 20 years. The First Wave impacted WSMR during the 1980s when more than 800 federal positions were reviewed for contracting out the work; the 1980s study was cancelled. The Second Wave occurred from 1997 to 2000 when nearly 500 positions were reviewed; this wave included base operations functions such as facility engineering, logistics, housing management, and library and education functions. Also, a few Research, Development, Test and Evaluation support functions were reviewed, such as Timing and Meteorology. The majority of these studies resulted in a government win with the functions remaining in-house.

The Third Wave is more extensive than any of the other waves. In the Third Wave, all functions not specifically excluded from the process by Headquarters, Department of the Army will be scheduled for review, with a plan scheduled to be developed early in 2003. This new wave of studies includes functions that have not been reviewed in the past, such as information technology, environmental services, engineering services, administrative services, resource management, civilian and military personnel, community activities, etc.

Even functions that already have been reviewed through the last Commercial Activities process in 1999-2000 will be up for review unless they are specifically re-exempted.

White Sands Missile Range has requested exemptions for all Army Test and Evaluation Command/Installation Management Activity functions at WSMR.

Army tenet activities are being handled by their respective higher headquarters. The requests were approved by Brig. Gen. Engel and forwarded to the Developmental Test Command for consideration on Nov. 14.

If approved by ATEC, the requests for exception will be sent to the Assistant Secretary of the Army, Manpower and Reserve Affairs for final approval in December.

WSMR will be notified in early January of the final decisions on our requests for exemption.

Functions not exempted in this process will be scheduled for review when local implementation plans are developed, probably in January.

Once headquarters Department of the Army approves the WSMR Implementation Plans, and they are announced to the workforce, WSMR will have no more than 12 months to complete the study or studies from the date the studies are announced to Congress.

Brig. Gen. Engel has been directly involved in this fast moving train from the time WSMR received its first directive on Nov. 6 to submit any requests for exemption. The WSMR community will be informed as more information becomes available.